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## COMMUNICATION

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*To the Editor of the "American Journal of Sociology":*

SIR: In their informing article on "Sociology" in the *Cyclopedia of Education*, Vol. V (1913), Professors A. A. Tenney and F. H. Giddings make the following statement: "The first teaching of scientific sociology as a regular part of a college curriculum appears to have been in the United States when Professor Sumner in 1873 introduced Spencer's *Study of Sociology* as a textbook at Yale" (p. 358). The fact of Sumner's priority in this matter I have no reason to dispute; but the statements in reference to the *date* of his action and the *book* he is said to have used would appear to be brought in question by the following data.

In a sketch of Sumner, recently reprinted from the *Popular Science Monthly*, Vol. XXXIX (1889), by A. G. Keller in *The Challenge of Facts*, the third volume of Sumner's essays issued under his editorship by the Yale Press, it is stated that Sumner entered upon his duties at Yale as professor of political and social science in the autumn of 1872; in this connection he is quoted to the following effect:

I was definitely converted to evolution by Professor Marsh's horses some time about 1875 or 1876. . . . As Spencer's *Principles of Sociology* was now coming out in numbers, I was constantly getting evidence that sociology, if it borrowed the theory of evolution in the first place, would speedily render it back again enriched by new and independent evidence. I formed a class to read Spencer's book in the parts as they came out, and I believe that I began to interest men in this important department of study, and to prepare them to follow its development, years before any such attempt was made at any other university in the world [pp. 10, 11].

A reading of this statement leaves the impression that the date at which Sumner formed the class of which he speaks was in the neighborhood of "1875 or 1876." This impression is strengthened by an examination of the dates at which appeared "the parts" of the "System of Synthetic Philosophy" which were comprised in Spencer's *Principles of Sociology*. The first of these parts came out in June, 1874; the last in June, 1877, according to Spencer's prefaces contained in Vol. I of a reprint of the third edition of the *Principles of Sociology*, Appleton, 1897. These facts make it impossible that Sumner could have formed

a class to read "the parts as they came out" till after June, 1874. And here it should be noted that Messrs. Tenney and Giddings speak of the *Study of Sociology*, whereas Sumner mentions only the *Principles of Sociology*. The essays comprised in the *Study of Sociology* did indeed play a decisive part in impelling Sumner to choose sociology as his field of work, as can be seen from a reference to the brief sketch of his life in *The Challenge of Facts*, but it is the later work that he seems to have used as a "textbook."

Finally, an examination of the Yale catalogues from the year 1872-73, through the year 1874-75, reveals Sumner as a lecturer and teacher in several subjects, but not in sociology. It is only when one comes to the outline of the work given in the year 1875-76, that the word "sociology" makes its appearance in these catalogues. The statement of Sumner's courses for that year for the graduate students reads as follows: "Professor Sumner will instruct in Constitutional Law, with lectures on the History of Politics and Finance in the United States; also, in Sociology" (p. 49). According to the method followed in the catalogues, these courses would seem to have been taken up in the first, second, and third terms in the order named. Such reckoning would give as the date for the course in sociology the spring of 1876.

In view, therefore, of these facts, it becomes a matter of interest to know on what evidence reliance is placed to prove the accuracy of the statement quoted at the beginning of this letter.

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March 16, 1915

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#### ANNOUNCEMENT

The next meeting of the American Sociological Society will be held in co-operation with the American Economic Association at Lexington, Kentucky, December 28-30, 1915.